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The mollusk of her dreams

INSIDER

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Last Friday I fell in love... fell in love with oysters that is.

I spent my morning with Don Merry and his crew from Island Creek Oysters learning the tricks of the trade. Spending all day on Duxbury Bay in the hot sun might sound like the life, and believe me I definitely enjoyed it, but they work hard. From the time the oysters are little seedlings, to the time they reach full maturity, the Island Creek staff treats them as if they were caring for a child.

To learn about the process of oyster farming and growth you can refer to my two-part story on Island Creek Oysters elsewhere in this paper, for now I would like to tell you about the wonders of the sea from me.

Ever since I was a child I have been fascinated with the ocean,

and marine life. Had it not been for my love of writing, and hatred of math, I may have become a marine biologist or scientist or something. Seeing the spitting razor clams, picking up a giant hermit crab, and moon snail was awesome. I was like a kid in a candy store wanting to touch and see everything.

The smell of the oysters, and the raw fishy stench of low tide soothed me to the core. Smells only a real lover of the sea can appreciate. I was so tempted by my curiosity of the oyster farming business I even considered quitting my day job and joining the men and women of Island Creek Oysters. Many people don't realize what goes into creating the delicious morsel that is slurped with Tabasco, lemon or lime, in one gulp. We take for granted the watchful eye that keeps these sea creatures alive and well for our enjoyment.

It is all about the water temperature, climate, and care that make Island Creek Oysters one of the

most sought after oysters in New England. I know I took for granted the wonders of the water, and all the creatures of the sea I love to dine on.

Merry, Island Creek Oyster owner Skip Bennett and oyster farmer Christine Horne informed me of the science that goes into oyster farming. Although, they said a lot of what they learned came from trial and error over the years, they also had to do their share of learning about the business.

Just like any type of farming, inclement weather is always a concern. Merry said that a bad crop, a disease, or a severe storm, such as a hurricane or nor'easter, could destroy his livelihood and diminish his paycheck. The boys from Island Creek depend on their skills and good water to get paid.

With high demand for their product from some of the finest restaurants in the country it doesn't matter if there is a foot of snow, they harvest their oysters all year long. Merry owns one of the

lots that allow the men to harvest the oysters in the winter. Although it was a beautiful summer day last Friday, Merry has his crew preparing some of the oyster bags for the winter months.

While basking in the sun on a summer escape from the office I learned these men and women work hard every day. But it is well worth the reward when your oysters are featured in top name New York eateries like Per Se, and written about in local magazines like *Edible Boston*, as well as world-wide magazines like the February 2006 issue of *Playboy*.

As a true oyster lover myself, the Island Creek Oysters are some of the best I have had. I went to the Duxbury Oyster Festival for its conception last year, and plan on making it a yearly visit. Hopefully next year I will get the chance to take my father, a person with a passion for oysters far beyond my years.

I encourage everyone to try Island Creek Oysters, you won't be disappointed!